DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 236 482 CG 017 032

AUTHOR Tiffany, Phyllis, G.; Dey, Kay
TITLE Control and the Aged: Environmental or Personality Factors.
PUB DATE 14 Apr 83
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Southwestern Psychological Association (29th, San Antonio, TX, April 21-23, 1983).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Development; *Aging (Individuals); *Attribution Theory; Gerontology; Individual Characteristics; *Individual Power; *Locus of Control; Middle Aged Adults; Older Adults; *Personality Traits
IDENTIFIERS Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory; Tiffany Experienced Control Scales

ABSTRACT

Control over self, lifestyle, and environment is a major factor in how one ages. To investigate how age acts as an environmental force in affecting perceptions of control, 45 adults, aged 60-80, from western Kansas were administered the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS), the Tiffany Experienced Control Scales (ECS), the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), and the Personal Mental Health Data Form for Older People. Subjects were divided into three groups according to living situations (residential facility, community residence with family members, economically independent community residence apart from family). The ECS measured control in terms of direction (from or over the environment) and situations (work, school, sex, community, home, other people, and in general). An analysis of the results of the MMPI and the ECS showed that a clear relationship existed between the neurotic triad of the MMPI (psychopathic deviance, schizophrenia, psychasthenia) and the experience of control from the environment. Subjects who scored high on the hypochondriasis, depression, and conversion hysteria subscales of the MMPI also experienced high control from the environment; low incidence subjects experienced more control over the environment. Further research with larger subject pools is recommended. (BL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED236482

CONTROL AND THE AGED:

ENVIRONMENTAL OR PERSONALITY FACTORS

Phyllis G. Tiffany

Fort Hays State University

Kay Dey

Winfield, Kansas

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Phyllis G. Tiffany

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CG 017032

Paper presented at Southwestern Psychological Association meetings, San Antonio, Texas, Thursday, April 14, 1983.

CONTROL AND THE AGED:
ENVIRONMENTAL OR PERSONALITY FACTORS

Phyllis G. Tiffany

Fort Hays State University

Kay Dey

Winfield, Kansas

Introduction

This paper is an attempt to integrate some information relating to two under researched areas which are currently gaining in social focus. These are aging and control. The two may at first seem to be quite desperate, yet control over one's self, one's life style and one's environment may be seen as a major factor in how one ages.

Social psychologists, focusing on the organism in a social environment, have observed that powerlessness, in the face of uncontrollable external forces experienced by lower SES subjects, is a source of persistent fatalistic beliefs and promotes a reliance on chance and fate. Other social-psychological studies have emphasized personal attitudes and beliefs or expectancies as being basic to feelings of powerlessness.

Tiffany (1965) and Tiffany, Shontz, & Woll (1969) developed a model of control focusing on perceived control as an experiential construct. The model of perceived control is conceptualized as consisting of four components: (1) control from inner, (FI) organismic states, such as impulses; (b) control (OI) over these states; (c) control over (OE) the environment; and (d) control from (FE) the environment. A high degree of control over internal and external forces represents self-determined behavior, whereas high control from internal and external forces represents non-self determined behavior. Studies depicting

the four areas of control in a variety of situations significantly differentiated Admissions and Pre-discharge psychiatric patients, the latter group having the higher mean scores in control over internal and external forces (Tiffany, 1967). Subsequent studies similarly differentiated a group of vocational problem cases with histories of chronic job hopping from a socio-economically comparable group of clients who had been employed one year, with the latter group showing significantly higher scores in their control over themselves and their environment (Tiffany, Cowan, & Tiffany, 1969). The authors also found that individuals who generally obtain high powerless scores were more prone to react impulsively under increased stress conditions. Finally, the experienced control scale showed no correlation to the I-E (Rotter, 1954) expectancy scale (Tiffany, Salkin, & Cowan, 1970), and very low correlation between the from environment components (Tiffany and Markley, 1975).

While the concepts underlying the two scales are not as similar as they may at first seem, both generalized expectancies of control and experienced control are necessary dimensions for providing measures of powerlessness from a social-psychological perspective. What is lacking at this point are environmental measures of external forces operating above and beyond the individual's own form of reference to provide adequate indexes for assessing the magnitude of environmental pressures.

Directly related to our purpose here, how does age act as an environmental force to affect one's perceptions of control in his environment?

A 1967 study by Postema and Schell found that an age effect is demonstrated on the MMPI for both normal and abnormal subjects. By definition of the MMPI, older adults are more neurotic.

Brozek (1955) using a population of 156 male college students ages 17 to 25 and 233 business and professional men ages 45 to 55, found a number of items on the MMPI which differentiated the two age groups.

Britton and Savage in 1966 recommended that MMPI age norms be created for use with elderly subjects. Aaronson (1960) found the MMPI to show a stronger relationship between personality factors and age than with abnormal behavior. It is his contention that age should be used as an unifying factor for studying personality change.

Method

Subjects were 45 volunteers aged 60 to 80 from western Kansas (Dey, 1975) Three groups of 15 each were selected according to living accommodations. Group I were residents in a residential facility for the aged. Group II were persons maintaining a residence in the community with other family members or separate but near family members. Group III were persons who were continuing to maintain a residence in the community apart from family or health care facilities and who were economically independent.

Instruments

1. The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (Wechsler, 1958).

2. Tiffany Experienced Control Scale (ECS; Tiffany, 1967). The ECS consists of 32, 100 millimeters scales, one for each component (FI, OI, OE, FE) for eight different situations. The eight situations (WORK, SCHOOL, OPPOSITE SEX, SAME SEX, COMMUNITY, HOME, OTHER PEOPLE, and in GENERAL) were chosen to tap as broad an area of daily functioning as possible.

3. Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (Lanyon, 1968).

4. Personal Mental Health Data Form for Older People (Butler & Lewis, 1973).

Design and Analysis

In addition to an analysis of variance to determine group differences, Pearson product correlation coefficients were obtained between all scales of the MMPI, the WAIS, and the ECS.

Results and Discussion

Groups were collapsed and only the relationship between the ECS and the MMPI were looked at in this study.

Hypochondriasis Scale (HS) and ECS

Situations on the ECS which produced significant correlations with HS were SCHOOL, OPPOSITE SEX, HOME, OTHER PEOPLE, GENERAL (n=33). Of eight significant correlations, four were positive and four were negative. All positive correlations, regardless of situations, were with the from components, suggesting (see Table 1) subject high on HS experience high control from

TABLE 1

	FI	OI	OE	FE
SCHOOL	.45*	.10	.14	.44
OPPOSITE SEX	-.06	-.33	-.52*	.37
HOME	.13	-.51*	-.43	.52*
OTHER PEOPLE	.25	-.47*	-.48*	.59*
GENERAL	.31	-.41	-.44	.50*

*Significant

at either the internal or external loci. All negative correlations were with the over components. Negative correlations with over would suggest that subjects

with low HS experience more control over at either the internal or external loci.

Those subjects showing a high HS score also experienced high from environment scores for HOME (r = .52; 27% of variance accounted for), OTHER PEOPLE r = .59; 35% of variance accounted for), and GENERAL (r = 50; 25% of variance accounted for). They experienced high scores from internal (r = .45; 20% of variance accounted for) the SCHOOL situation. At the same time they experienced low control scores over internal sources for HOME (r = .51; 26% of variance accounted for), OTHER PEOPLE (r =-.47; 22% of variance accounted for), and OPPOSITE SEX (r = -.52; 27% of variance accounted for).

They also experienced low control scores over external (r = .48; 22% of variance accounted for) with OTHER PEOPLE. High over scores suggest a more self sufficient and independent functioning with less Hypochondriasis. High from scores suggest subjects experiencing more hypochondriacal complaints also experience low control over their life situations.

While the only coefficient (r = .50; 25% of variance accounted for) which met our criterion for significance for the situation GENERAL was from the environment, high negative correlations were found for both over components. In spite of an assumption that GENERAL reflects some composite of other situations, it is not possible to know if it is an accurate reflection of all situations in this matrix, those showing high correlations, or some undetermined combination of situations. Partial correlations analyzed for some pattern of relationship with each scale might possibly offer information for this situation.

The group score of 55 was within the normal range.

Depression Scale (D) and ECS

A total of nine experienced control scales correlated (see Table 2)

TABLE 2

	FI	OI	OE	FE
QUESTIONNAIRE	.48*	.16	.06	.50*
WORK	.28	-.30	-.27	.50*
SCHOOL	.43	.07	.14	.51*
SAME SEX	.08	.08	-.11	.53*
HOME	.09	-.45*	-.45	.61*
OTHER PEOPLE	.32	-.40	-.42	.68*
GENERAL	.39	-.35	-.32	.55*

*Significant

with D (n = 34). The situations QUESTIONNAIRE, WORK, SCHOOL, SAME SEX, HOME, OTHER PEOPLE, and GENERAL all produced at least one correlation. Again the pattern of positive correlations for control from and negative conditions for control over was demonstrated. The only over correlation which was negative was at the internal loci for HOME (r = 45; 20% of variance accounted for). This contrast with the other situations may reflect the living arrangements of the subjects in this study. The from external, and from internal correlation was for the situation QUESTIONNAIRE (r = .48; 23% of variance accounted for).

A positive correlation of r = .68 (47% of variance accounted for) between from external with OTHER PEOPLE; r = .55 (31% of variance accounted for) between from external with GENERAL; r = .50 (25% of variance accounted for)

between from external taking QUESTIONNAIRE: r = .50 (25% of variance accounted for) between from external at WORK; r = .51 (26% of variance accounted for) between from external at SCHOOL; and r = .53 between from external with SAME SEX suggests subjects experiencing a subdued or mild dissatisfaction state in a number of situations representing interactions with other people.

Once again the group score of 53 was within the normal range.

Conversion Hysteria Scale (HY) and ECS

The HY Scale (HY) produced five significant (see Table 3) correlations

TABLE 3

Conversion Hysteria Scale (HY) and ECS

	FI	OI	OE	FE
QUESTIONNAIRE	.44	.21	.08	.51*
OPPOSITE SEX	-.00	-.34	-.47*	.33
HOME	.15	-.53*	-.39	.44
OTHER PEOPLE	-.31	-.45*	-.41	.52*

*Significant

(n = 34). Once again the positive correlations were with from external components; r = .52 (27% of variance accounted for) for from external and r = -.45 for control over internal; with OTHER PEOPLE and r = .51 (27% of variance for) for from external taking QUESTIONNAIRE. The negative correlations were r = .43 (28% of variance accounted for) with over internal at HOME, and r = .47 (22% of variance accounted for) with over external with OPPOSITE SEX.

Subjects high in HY have a tendency to see the world through rose colored glasses or to deny reality. That they also feel little control over themselves is suggested by ECS.

Scores for HY are considered normal between 45 and 60. The group score was 56.

The Triad Profiles

One of the best ways to interpret the MMPI is by looking at combinations of scales and develop a profile. Scales 1, 2, and 3 are called the neurotic triad or triad profile. The profile for this subject population fell into a normal through slightly elevated range. The elevation of the scales did not fluctuate enough to merit particular interest. This profile would support Cantor, et al., (1962) that the elderly do not constitute a special group of subjects requiring modification of MMPI scores. The face validity apparent in the high positive correlations between MMPI scales and from external components suggests that a high degree of veridicality does exist between the circumstance of aging and the perceptions of being aged.

Psychopathic Deviance Scale (PD) and ECS

PD on Scale 4 produced significant correlations (see Table 4) with three

TABLE 4

Psychopathic Deviance (PD) and ECS

	FI	OI	OE	FE
QUESTIONNAIRE	.47*	.25	.14	.47*
HOME	-.14	-.39	-.43	.45*

*Significant

from scales (n = 34). These were from external at HOME (r = .45) accounting for 20% of the variance, and from external and from internal taking the QUESTIONNAIRE (r = .47) accounting for 22% of variance accounted for each correlation.

Persons high on this scale are generally seen as fighting something and where extreme suggests antisocial behavior. When scores fall within the normal range for 45 through 60, it is thought the subjects show little dissatisfaction and are willing to go along as things are. The score for this group was 57. While this was the most elevated of the MMPI profile scores, it was still within the normal range for the group.

Schizophrenic Scale (SC) and ECS

Only one significant ECS (see Table 5) emerged for SC (n = 34). From

TABLE 5

Schizophrenia Scale (SC) and ECS

	FI	OI	OE	FE
WORK	.08	-.33	-.20	.45*

*Significant

external at WORK obtained as r = .45 accounting for 20% of the variance. The SC scale measures mental confusion. The only correlation was with the WORK situation. The lack of greater significance with situation WORK may be reflective of the retirement situation of most subjects.

Psychosthenia Scale (PT) and ECS

Only one significant ECS (see Table 6) emerged for the PT scale (n = 32).

TABLE 6

Psychosthenia Scale (PT) and ECS

	FI	OI	OE	FE
SAME SEX	-.08	.09	-.06	.51*

*Significant

From external when with SAME SEX produced an r = .51 accounting for 26% of the variance. The score of .51 was well within the normal range of 45 through 60. This finding may simply reflect lessened interaction with members of the OPPOSITE SEX in later years.

Social Introversion Scale (Si) and ECS

The final scale on which there were significant correlations (see Table 7)

TABLE 7

Social Introversion (SI) and ECS

	FI	OI	OE	FE
SAME SEX	.01	.39	.03	.56*
OTHER PEOPLE	.10	-.00	-.10	.49*

* Significant

was the Si scale, (n = 34). Persons with high Si scores generally like to spend time away from others. The from external with OTHER PEOPLE correlated with Si, (r = .49, 24% of variance accounted for) and with from external while with the SAME SEX, (r = .56, 31% of variance accounted for). The from external scales for both situations imply that subjects feel a high degree of control from others and that control is not comforable for the person scoring high on Si.

Summary

Those variables which have been discussed in this paper clearly show a relationship between the neurotic triad profile of the MMPI and the experience of control from the environment as distinct from control over environmental forces and internal or self forces. The question of whether or not the aged are neurotic (as defined by the MMPI) or whether they appear that way because of the defining dimensions of tests of neuroticism is still unclear.

Horney's (1937) contention that neuroticism comes about from separation from one's feelings and the absence of believing one is a determining force in one's life may seem to support the idea that the old are neurotic by definition.

Neuroticism in the old may, in fact, be a healthy coping mechanism for the stresses that accrue with age.

Arguments to establish greater feelings of self-direction for the aged would seem to follow from this study. Certainly the research here seems to provide a bridge between Fromm's (1962) observations that man sees himself as dependent on powers outside himself and Rosow's (1973) suggestions for structures for peer interrelatedness through social programs for the aged.

The present study was limited by the number of subjects. However, the data suggest enough significant differences on the ECS to provide motivation for such a study with a large number of subjects. Individual scores and ratio scores, frequently used in ECS studies are available. Any one of these analyses would provide a study of experienced control for subjects 60 to 80 years of age.

Reference Notes

1. Tiffany, D. W., & Markley, R. P. The place of locus of control within experienced control. Paper presented at American Psychological Association meeting, Chicago, 1975.

2. Tiffany, D. W. Experienced Control: A significant personality variable, Doctoral Dissertation, University of Kansas (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1966), No. 66-6056.

References

Aaronson, B. S. A dimension of personality change with aging. Journal of Clinical Psychology, 1960, 16, 63-65.

Britton, P. G., & Savage, R. D. The MMPI and the aged: Some normative data from a community sample. British Journal of Psychiatry, 1966, 112, 941-943.

Brozek, J. Personality changes with age: An item analysis of the MMPI. Journal of Gerontology, 1955, 10, 194-206.

Butler, R. N., & Lewis, M. I. Aging and mental health: Positive psychosocial approaches. London: C. V. Mosby Co., 1973.

Cantor, A., Day, C. W., Imboden, J. B., & Cluff, L. E. The influence of age and health states on the MMPI scores of a normal population. Journal of Clinical Psychology, 1962, 18, 71-73.

Dey, K. Psychological, social, and physiological variation as a concomitant to environmental independence and dependence in an over 60 population. Unpublished Thesis, Fort Hays Kansas State College, 1975.

Fromm, E. Alienation under capitalism. In E. and Mary Josephson (Eds) Man alone: Alienation in modern society. N. Y. Dell, 1962, 56-73.

Horney, K. The neurotic personality of our time. New York, W. W. Norton & Co., 1937.

Postema, L. J., & Schell, R. E. Aging and psychopathology: Some MMPI evidence for seemingly greater neurotic behavior among older people. Journal of Clinical Psychology, 1967, 23, 140-143.

Rosow, I. The social context of the aging self. The Gerontologist, 1973, 13, 82-87.

Rotter, J. B. Social learning and clinical psychology. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1954.

Tiffany, D. W. Mental health: A function of experienced control. Journal of Clinical Psychology, 1967, 23, 311-315.

Tiffany, D. W., Cowan, J., & Shontz, F. C. Generalized expectancies for control of reinforcement compared to experienced control. Journal of Clinical Psychology, 1970, 26, 519-520.

Tiffany, D. W., Salkin, G. & Cowan, J. A model of control. Journal of General Psychology, 81, 1969, 67-82.

Wechsler, D. The measurement and appraisal of adult intelligence. Baltimore: Williams and Williams, 1958.